

How to Be Healed of a Deep Father Wound

A mixed martial arts fighter named Jens Pulver had grown up under the worst of circumstances, including an incident where his dad put a gun in 7-year-old Jens' mouth but then pulled it away, saying, "You aren't worth the bullets."

Pulver became a Christian later in life and fought his way through the inaugural Ultimate Fighting Championship to win his weight class.

Pulver says, "When I was 15 I made myself a day I'm going to get so famous that I'm going to tell everybody about him. I'm going to get so famous that they are going to listen. It took me 20 years, but it kept me out there chasing the dream until I became a world champion."

Pulver was fighting his dad every time he climbed in the ring. He had a father wound.

5 Kinds of Fathers

Everyone is marked, positively or negatively, by their earthly father. Although everyone's family experience is unique, we have identified five general categories of fathers.

1. Tragic dad—this father isn't in the picture for some tragic reason (death, permanent debilitating medical problem).
2. Terrible dad—this father is absent for no good reason (runs off either before or after kids are born, shows little to no interest in being a parent).
3. Tough dad—this father is overbearing, dominating and intimidating (threatens like a drill sergeant, pushes like a bad boss or yells like an awful coach). The tough dad abuses his family.

4. Tender dad—this father is kind, sweet and nice but fails to protect his family (gets run over by tough guys, allows his kids to get bullied and pushed around, and watches his daughter end up with an abusive boyfriend because he won't step in the middle). This family is often financially broke because strong guys beat weak dad in business. The tender dad lets other people abuse his family.
5. Terrific dad—this dad isn't perfect, but he is godly, relational, wise, healthy, present and knows how to be both tough for the family and tender with the family (their dad provided for all of the family's needs). Financially, he makes good money. Spiritually, he leads in the worship of God. Relationally, he is encouraging, warm and connected. Socially, he nurtures healthy relationships with other families to provide community for his family. Humbly he owns his mistakes and apologizes when he is wrong.

How about you? What kind of father do you have? If you are a father, what kind of dad are you?

The father wound is an unhealed hurt from a physical or spiritual father, or father figure in our lives. Fathers fail us, and unless we forgive them and invite God the Father to heal our father wound, we remain burdened instead of unburdened, broken instead of healed and made bitter instead of made better. It leaves people open to the demonic through hurt and bitterness.

To heal the father wound, you need to forgive the earthly father(s) who failed you. This forgiveness will remove the demonic foothold that bitterness brings. Jesus promised, "I will not leave you as orphans." The orphan heart is the result of the father wound. Once you forgive your earthly father, your heart will be opened to receive the relationship you need with your heavenly Father.

To heal the father wound, you also need to deepen your relationship with God the Father. To be a Christian is to experience the fullness of “adoption as sons.”

Healing from the father wound leaves people open to the Holy Spirit of adoption and sonship. “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:14-17).

The Good News is that on the cross, Jesus Christ took our place and endured a Father wound so that ours could be healed. On the cross, when Jesus asked the Father, “Why have you forsaken me?” He was wounded by the Father. At that moment, the Father turned His back on the Son as Jesus was wounded and forsaken in our place. When Jesus endured the Father wound, He broke a spiritual curse and reconciled us back to our Father so that we would not experience the forsaking that He did. {eoa}

This article was adapted from Win Your War: Fight in the Realm You Don't See For Freedom in the One You Do (Oct. 2019) by Mark and Grace Driscoll.

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